

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A computer-implemented gaming method comprising:

(a) causing at least one processor to execute a plurality of instructions to identifying a player of a first gaming unit, said player identified in association with a player tracking card;

(b) after a tournament game card is provided to the player in response to paying a fee, enabling the identified player to select to play in a tournament, said tournament associated with tournament gaming software and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card; and

(c) if the identified player selects to play in the tournament:

(i) receiving from said first gaming unit, an identifier associated with a the tournament game card, wherein the tournament is in progress when the identifier is received, ~~the tournament game card is provided to the player in response to paying a fee and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;~~

(ii) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to determining-determine whether the identifier received from the first gaming unit is authentic; and

(iii) if the identifier is determined to be authentic:

(A) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to determining-determine a time duration the identified player may play in the time remaining in the tournament in progress, said determined time duration being based on the identifier;

(B) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to initializing-initialize a timer with the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(C) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to starting the timer;

(D) for each play of a tournament game during the determined time duration:

(I) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(II) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

(III) causing at least one display device to ~~displaying~~ any determined award to the identified player;

(E) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to stopping the timer after one of:

(I) the timer has run for the amount of time of said determined time duration, and

(II) when the identified player terminates play on said first gaming unit prior to expiration of the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(F) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determineing~~ and ~~displaying~~ a tournament score of the identified player,

(G) causing the at least one display device to display the ~~determined tournament score,~~ said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game;

(GH) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, said determination based a comparison of the

tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player; and

(H1) if the identified player is the determined winning player of the tournament, causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to determining-determine a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the identifier is printed on the tournament game card.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the identifier is electronically encoded on the tournament game card.

Claims 4 to 5 (canceled).

Claim 6 (currently amended): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to determining-determine the time duration based on the identifier comprises causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to retrieving-retrieve the time duration from storage based on the identifier.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to determining-determine the time duration based on the identifier comprises causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to decoding-decode the identifier to determine the time duration.

Claim 8 (canceled).

Claim 9 (currently amended): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, further comprising:

causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to stopping the timer at a request of the identified player; and

causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to restarting the timer at a request of the identified player if the timer has not run for the determined amount of time.

Claim 10 (withdrawn): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 9, further comprising:

storing an indication of a remaining amount of time for the player to play in the tournament after the timer stops; and

re-initializing the timer based on the stored indication of the remaining amount of time before the timer restarts.

Claim 11 (withdrawn): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 10, further comprising:

receiving the identifier from a second gaming unit after the timer stops;

determining whether the identifier received from the second gaming unit is authentic;

wherein re-initializing the timer comprises re-initializing the timer if the identifier received from the second gaming unit is determined to be authentic; and

enabling the second gaming unit for play in the tournament while the timer is running.

Claim 12 (withdrawn): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 11, wherein the timer comprises a first timer implemented by the first gaming unit and a second timer implemented by the second gaming unit;

wherein initializing the timer comprises initializing the first timer; wherein enabling the first gaming unit comprises enabling the first gaming unit while the first timer is running;

wherein re-initializing the timer comprises initializing the second timer; and

wherein enabling the second gaming unit comprises enabling the second gaming unit for play in the tournament while the second timer is running.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the first gaming unit.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by the tournament game card.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the timer is implemented, at least in part, by a tournament server.

Claim 16 (canceled).

Claim 17 (previously presented): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the tournament gaming software comprises at least one of an executable file, a configuration file, a data file, a pay table, and a plurality of seeds for a random number generator.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the tournament game card comprises at least one of a magnetic swipe card, a smart card, a PC card, and a portable memory device.

Claim 19 (currently amended): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ the tournament score of the identified player comprises causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ the tournament score of the identified player before a timer has stopped.

Claim 20 (currently amended): The computer-implemented gaming method according to claim 1, wherein causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ the tournament score of the identified player comprises causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ the tournament score of the identified player after a timer has stopped.

Claim 21 (currently amended): A tournament server comprising:
a network interface operatively coupled to a network;
a controller operatively coupled to the network interface, the controller comprising a processor and a memory configured to operate with the processor, the controller configured to:

(a) identify a player of a first gaming unit, said player identified in association with a player tracking card;

(b) after a tournament game card is provided to the player in response to paying a fee, receive from a first gaming unit and via the network interface, an identifier associated with ~~a~~the tournament game card, ~~wherein the tournament game card is provided to the identified player in response to paying a fee and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;~~

(c) determine whether the identifier received from the first gaming unit is authentic;

(d) if the identifier is determined to be authentic:

(i) determine a time duration the identified player may play in a tournament that is in progress, said determined time duration being based on the identifier and time remaining in the tournament, ;

(ii) initialize a timer with the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(iii) start the timer;

(iv) for each play of a tournament game during the determined time duration:

(A) determine a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(B) determine any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

(C) display any determined award to the identified player;

(v) stop the timer after one of:

(A) the timer has run for the amount of time of said time duration,

(B) when the identified player terminates play on said first gaming unit prior to expiration of the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(vi) determine and display a tournament score of the identified player, said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game;

(vii) determine if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, said determination based a comparison of the tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player; and

(viii) if the identified player is the winning player of the tournament is determined, determine a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player,

Claims 22 to 23 (canceled).

Claim 24 (previously presented): The tournament server according to claim 21, wherein the controller is configured to determine the time duration from storage based on the identifier.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The tournament server according to claim 21, wherein the controller is configured to decode the identifier to determine the time duration.

Claim 26 (canceled).

Claim 27 (withdrawn): The tournament server according to claim 26, wherein the controller is configured to:

stop the timer at a request of the player; and restart the timer at a request of the player if the timer has not run for the determined amount of time.

Claim 28 (withdrawn): The tournament server according to claim 27, wherein the controller is configured to:

store an indication of a remaining amount of time for the player to play in the tournament after the timer has been stopped; and

re-initialize the timer based on the stored indication of the remaining amount of time before the timer is restarted.

Claim 29 (withdrawn): The tournament server according to claim 28, wherein the controller is configured to:

receive the identifier from a second gaming unit after the player stopped the timer; determine whether the identifier received from the second gaming unit is authentic;

re-initialize the timer if the identifier received from the second gaming unit is determined to be authentic; and

enable the second gaming unit for play in the tournament while the timer is running.

Claims 30 to 60 (canceled).

Claim 61 (currently amended): A non-transitory computer readable medium including computer executable program code for instructing a computer to operate as follows:

(a) identify a player of a first gaming unit, said player identified in association with a player tracking card, said first gaming unit configured for playing in a tournament;

(b) after a tournament game card is provided to the player in response to paying a fee, receive from the first gaming unit an identifier associated with a the tournament game card-, wherein the tournament is in progress when the identifier is received, ~~the tournament game card is provided to the identified player in response to paying a fee~~ and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

(c) determine whether the identifier received from the first gaming unit is authentic;

(d) if the identifier is determined to be authentic:

(i) determine a time duration the identified player may play in the time remaining in the tournament in progress, said determined time duration being based on the identifier, ;

(ii) initialize a timer with the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(iii) start the timer;

(iv) for each play of a tournament game during the determined time duration:

(A) determine a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(B) determine any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

(C) display any determined award to the identified player;

(V) stop the timer after one of:

(A) the timer has run for the amount of time of said determined time duration, and

(B) when the player terminates play on said first gaming unit prior to expiration of the amount of time of said determined time duration;

(vi) determine and display a tournament score of the identified player, said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game;

(vii) determine if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, said determination based a comparison of the tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player; and

(viii) if the identified player is the determined winning player of the tournament, determine a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player.

Claim 62 (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for enabling a player to join a tournament in progress using a device, said method comprising:

(a) causing at least one processor to execute a plurality of instructions to identifying a player of a first device, said player identified in association with a player tracking card;

(b) after a tournament game card is provided to the player, receiving, from the identified player who has selected the first device to play in a tournament between multiple players, a tournament identifier associated with a ~~the~~ tournament game card-, wherein the tournament is in progress when the first device is selected by the player for playing the tournament and the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

(c) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine based on the tournament identifier and the time that the tournament identifier is received whether to enable the player to join the tournament;

(d) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine, based on the tournament identifier, a tournament duration indicative of a time duration that the player may play in the tournament in the time remaining in the tournament when it is determined to enable the player to join the tournament; and

(e) if the first device is not configured for playing the tournament when the first device is selected by the player for playing the tournament and it is determined to enable the player to join the tournament based on the tournament identifier, causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~configuring~~ configure the first device to join the tournament;

(f) enabling the first device to join the tournament for tournament play by the player for the determined tournament duration, wherein each play of a tournament game played for the determined tournament duration includes:

(i) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(ii) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

(iii) causing at least one display device to displaying any determined award to the identified player; and

(g) upon a conclusion of the tournament:

(i) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ and displaying a tournament score of the identified player,

(ii) causing the at least one display device to display the determined tournament score, said determined tournament score being displayed in addition to any displayed awards for the plays of the tournament game,

(iii) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ if the identified player is a winning player of the tournament, said determination based a comparison of the tournament score of the identified player to at least one tournament score of at least one different player, and

(iiiiv) if the identified player is the determined winning player of the tournament, causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining-determine~~ a value payout to be awarded to the identified winning player.

Claim 63 (canceled).

Claim 64 (currently amended): The computer-implemented method as recited in claim 62, wherein the causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine of whether to enable the player to join the tournament comprises:

causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to ~~determining~~ determine whether the tournament identifier has been received within a acceptable time window allocated for tournament play.

Claim 65 (withdrawn): The computer-implemented method as recited in claim 62, further comprising:

receiving a request from the player to stop playing the tournament; and
determining and storing the time left for that player to play in the tournament as the player's remaining time in the tournament, thereby allowing the player to resume tournament play using the first device and/or a second device.

Claim 66 (withdrawn): The computer-implemented method as recited in claim 65, further comprising:

receiving at a controller comprising a processor and a memory an identifier from a second gaming device, wherein the second device has been selected by the player to play in the tournament;

determining, based on the identifier a second tournament duration that the player may play in the time remaining in the tournament; and

enabling the second device to play in the tournament for the second tournament duration, thereby allowing the player to use the second device to join the tournament in progress and play in the tournament for the determined amount of time for the player to play the tournament duration.

Claim 67 (currently amended): A computing system comprising:
~~including~~ at least one processor programmed to:

identify a player in association with a player tracking card;

receive a tournament game card from the identified player, the tournament game card associated with a tournament identifier, said receiving of the tournament game card representing a request to join a tournament in progress, wherein the tournament game card is distinct from the player tracking card;

determine based on the tournament identifier received whether to enable the identified player to join the tournament;

determine, based on the tournament identifier, a tournament time duration that the identified player may play in the time remaining in the tournament when it is determined to enable the identified player to join the tournament;

initialize a timer with the amount of time of said tournament time duration;

start the timer;

for each play of a tournament game for the determined tournament time duration:

(a) determine a tournament game outcome from a plurality of different tournament game outcomes,

(b) determine any award associated with the determined tournament game outcome, and

(c) display any determined award to the identified player;; and
stop the timer after one of:

(a) the timer has run for the amount of time of said tournament time duration and

(b) when the player terminates play on said computing system for tournament play prior to expiration of the amount of time of said tournament time duration.

Claim 68 (previously presented): The computing system as recited in claim 67, wherein said computing system includes at least one of the following:

- a gaming machine;
- a gaming server comprising said controller; and
- a portable gaming device.